



# Voyage of Citizen Pilgrims

## GTI Roundtable

### September 2014



The state-centric world order is incapable of addressing today's crises. Still, establishing efficacious transnational political institutions requires the emergence of a global community of world citizens. Richard Falk makes the case for the concept of the "citizen pilgrim" to reimagine citizenship to serve the universal *human* interest. Our panelists assess the potentials of and obstacles to expansive new forms of political action and solidarity.

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# Changing the Political Climate: A Transitional Imperative

Richard Falk

*After the final no there comes a yes  
And on that yes the future of the world depends.*  
Wallace Stevens

**Abstract:** The state-centric world order has proven incapable of offering solutions that serve the *human* interest, as distinct from the totality of *national* interests, for global challenges such as nuclear weaponry and climate change. Indeed, the nationalization of political identity has become a liability to achieving a functional and humane world order for the twenty-first century. The idea of “world citizenship,” however, prematurely assumes the existence of a global political community when this is precisely what is absent. The concept of “citizen pilgrim” posits that the most useful form of reimagining citizenship conceives of civic responsibility by reference to *time* as well as *space*. The citizen pilgrim is engaged in a struggle to create a global political community in the future that will have capabilities and an outlook that are attuned to human interests, including the need for long-term planning. Citizen pilgrims are dedicated to promoting a transition to a *humane world order* in which states likely remain the dominant actors on the global stage, whose priorities are subordinated as necessary to serve the interests of humanity as a whole.

The hopes and expectations of citizen pilgrims rest on the quest for a spiritually fulfilling future for all in sustainable harmony with nature.

## Points of Departure

The most daunting challenge of adapting to the realities of the Anthropocene era is achieving a soft transition (that is, without major warfare, economic collapse, or global environmental crisis) from our state-centric world order to a geo-centric reconfiguring of political community that enables the emergence of effective and humane global governance. The dominant existing framework for transnational and global political action is still largely entrapped in old habits of thought and action wedded to the primacy of the territorial sovereign state and myopic time horizons that are too short to shape adequate responses to the deepest challenges to the human future.

Empowering state actors and educating publics to be more humanly and globally oriented and far-sighted in their pursuits would generate hopes for a brighter future.<sup>1</sup> Such empowerment depends on a widespread reorientation of individual identities toward a new model of citizen, called here “a citizen pilgrim,” whose principal affinities are with the species and its natural surroundings rather than to any specific state, ethnicity, nationality, civilization, or religion. The hopes and expectations of citizen pilgrims rest on the quest for a spiritually fulfilling future for all in sustainable harmony with nature. In this respect, humanity is confronting, by a combination of unprecedented opportunity and danger, the practical and urgent imperative of fundamental change to meet existing threats and challenges and the prospect of catastrophic harm if a transition of sufficient magnitude does not occur in a timely fashion.

This inquiry presupposes that a Great Transition is necessary, possible, and desirable, even though, at present, it does not seem feasible. Proposing with all seriousness what is possible, yet not widely seen as feasible, is one way of “thinking outside the box.” This essay will explore two transitional paths to the future: (1) a revolutionary change in political consciousness and (2) statecraft that facilitates the pursuit of human and global interests. The first is actor-oriented, achieving transition without changing the structure of world order, whereas the second is system- or structure-oriented, insisting that needed behavioral changes will not happen without altering the institutional and ideational context within which policies and practices are currently shaped. These two paths are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, long-term success will depend on a substantial convergence, if not their synthesis.

## Citizens and States

Our age is defined by the growing contrast between identities rooted in a state-centric conception of citizenship and the pressing need to address the main challenges confronting humanity as a *whole*. The horizons of citizenship for most persons on the planet generally coincide with the territorial boundaries of the state and reflect the related sovereignty-oriented ideology of nationalism. Security for societies and individuals is mainly understood to be the responsibility of the

governing authorities of states. Efforts to entrust international institutions with some of this responsibility have not been successful, especially for problems of global scope such as war/peace and the management the world economy.<sup>2</sup>

The historical transition underway calls for a shift from structures and ideologies that serve the *part* to those that serve the *whole*, that is, humanity conceived of as a species. The political actors representing various parts include persons, corporations, NGOs, international institutions, religious organization, and states. Their outlook tends to be dominated by a fragmentary consciousness that seeks answers to various questions about “what is good for the part” while generally dismissing questions about “what is good for the whole” as meaninglessly abstract or piously sentimental. Granted, the forces driving the emergence of a global polity do not all consider the good of the whole, either; various forms of oppressive centralized governance are also seeking historical relevance.<sup>3</sup>

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Most people do not want or expect the perspective of the whole to be the basis of policy and action by decision-makers that represent the state, but are insistent that those who decide do their best to protect and promote what will most help the part, whether it be country, corporation, religion, or group interests. Citizenship is conferred by the state, which in return expects and demands loyalty, even a readiness to sacrifice lives for the sake of the nation-state, and certainly the obligation to pay taxes and uphold laws. Citizenship, then, is very much bound up with ideas of a social contract between state and citizen, that is, an exchange of benefits and duties.

The citizen of a democratic state is a composite of juridical and psychological forms. The state confers citizenship through its laws, enabling participation in elections, issuing passports, and offering some protection abroad. Citizenship in this conventional sense is a status that varies from state to state in its particulars and, in its essence, separates those who are included and those who are excluded. There are also legally grounded expectations of loyalty, the radical deviation from which can be the occasion for accusations of the capital crime of “treason.” At the same time, the citizen of a constitutional democracy enjoys the right to dissent and to oppose unjust policies through the judicial process and through competitive elections. As such, the identity of a “citizen” contrasts with that of a “subject” of an absolute monarchy, in which obedience is the paramount political norm.<sup>4</sup> A constitutional state struggles to maintain this delicate balance between the rights and duties of a citizen, especially in times of internal stress.<sup>5</sup>

The second face of citizenship is psycho-political, the sense of loyalty as an existential reality, not a juridical category. When Palestinian citizens of Israel oppose the policies of their government toward the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, they are reflecting a state of mind. Such sub-national identities and alienation from the nationality and orientation of the state is widespread in the world: the troubled realities of Kurds, Tamils, Basques, Kashmiris, and Western Saharans are illustrative, as are the numerous tribal loyalties throughout much of Africa or the marginalized

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identities of indigenous peoples throughout the Western Hemisphere and elsewhere. Many minorities feel alienated from the state of which they are citizens to varying degrees and collectively are, in effect, “captive nations” resident in states that do not command their loyalty.

Issues of treason and espionage vividly illustrate the contested nature of national loyalty in a globalizing world. When Edward Snowden violated American security regulations by releasing many documents of the National Security Agency and disclosed its surveillance operations, he claimed to be acting on the basis of conscience, whereas the official leaders of the state viewed his actions as a threat to national security. Another example is the plight of Mordecai Vanunu, a worker in the Israeli nuclear facility who many years ago confirmed the reality of Israel’s suspected arsenal of nuclear weaponry and has since been treated both as an enemy of the state and a hero of humanity, serving eighteen years in prison, and even after being released, placed under house arrest in Israel.

What is new in these struggles between dissent and loyalty is that the issues now have an agenda and context that may exist not only within national boundaries (the Catalans and Scots, for example) but beyond the borders of the state as well. Some political innovations have acknowledged the latter, especially the idea of European citizenship superimposed on the citizenship conferred by European Union member states. So far, there is little evidence that those living in Europe are more likely to be loyal to their regional than to the traditional state affiliations, but this idea of European citizenship at least illustrates the layering of citizenship, enabling a person to be a legal and psychological participant in polities bigger (and smaller) than the territorial state that alone qualifies for membership in the United Nations and most international institutions. The layering of regional identities seems beneficial from the perspective of encouraging the development of the European Union as an instrument of cooperation and participation more effective than traditional inter-governmental patterns, but it does not meet the most urgent challenges of a planet in crisis.

### Global Citizenship: Not a Reality, but an Aspiration

Some years ago, I was chatting with a stranger on a long international flight. He was a businessman who traveled the world to find markets for his products. His home was in Copenhagen. He spoke very positively about the European Union’s ability to overcome boundaries and national antagonisms. I asked him at that point in our conversation, “Does that make you feel like a European citizen?” His response was “Oh no, I am a world citizen.” I asked him what he meant by that, and his reply was revealing: “Wherever I travel in the world I stay in the same kind of hotel. It makes no difference where I am, everywhere I go in the world seems the same to me.”

Such an apolitical conception of world citizenship is a direct consequence of economic globalization and franchise capitalism. It is true that if you choose to stay in Westin or Intercontinental hotels the world’s major cities, you can travel the globe

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without ever leaving home, but this is a rather sterile view of the hopes and fears associated with the transition from a world of bounded nation-states absorbed by territorial concerns to a new world without boundaries. It surely leads to a weakening of the bonds of traditional citizenship without generating any new and broader sense of solidarity and community. It confuses the realities of the market with the realities of political community.

At the other extreme is the more familiar image of the world citizen as the idealist who experiences and celebrates the oneness of the planet and of humanity, overriding fragmented identities associated with the privileging of particular nations, ethnicities, religions, and civilizations. Like the businessman, the idealist embraces an apolitical conception of citizenship, one which affirms identity on the basis of sentiment and evades the hard political work of transformation. For such a world citizen, all that needs to be created is presupposed. The struggles of transition, as if by magic wand, are waved out of existence.

These conceptions of what it means to be a “world citizen” possess an underdeveloped view of the nature and value of citizenship. Being a proper citizen implies being an active participant in a democratic political community; extending loyalty; exhibiting approval and disapproval; voting; paying taxes; resonating to cultural expressions of unity by way of song, dance, and poetry; and having certain entitlements relating to reasonable expectations of human security. There is no possibility of having any of these attributes of citizenship fulfilled on a global scale given how the world is currently governed. Prematurely proclaiming oneself a world citizen, if other than as an expression of aspiration, is an empty gesture that misleads more than it instructs.

To think of oneself as a European citizen is somewhat more meaningful, although still, on balance, more confusing than clarifying. To be sure, Europe has virtually abolished internal borders, war between European states verges on the unthinkable, the Euro acts a common currency for almost the entire continent, European institutions have broad authority to override national policies and laws under many circumstances, Europe has a regional framework setting forth binding human rights standards and a tribunal to resolve conflicts as to their interpretation, and finally, Europe has a parliament of its own that is now elected by direct votes of people. Yet Europe has still failed to establish a political community that elicits widespread loyalty or exhibits much unity under stress, except in relation to an external enemy. Most Europeans remain overwhelming nationalistic in their loyalties and want their national government to do what is best for their country, rather than what is best for Europe should the two clash. European citizenship, as conferred by the Maastricht Treaty, is at this point still an unfulfilled promise rather than a meaningful status in either a juridical or an existential sense.

The reality of citizenship is best displayed during periods of crisis, and the European



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recession has made people far more aware of the fragility of the regional experiment as it bears on the future of Europe. As the Mediterranean members of the EU succumbed to the economic crisis, the northern European states, especially Germany, began to exhibit discomfort and express condescension. Irritated Berliners bemoaned why hard-working and prudent Germans should be helping lazy, indulgent Greeks live a decadent life beyond their means. In their turn, offended Greeks asked why they should forfeit their autonomy and mortgage their future to an anal retentive German fiscal policy that has learned none of the lessons of economic recovery from the experience of the Great Depression in the 1930s.

In contrast, during the same experience of sharp recession in the United States, the debate centered on such issues as banks being too big to fail or why Wall Street rather than Main Street should receive bailout billions, rather than on the recklessness of Alabama as compared to, say, Connecticut. In the United States, despite its deep federal structure, there is an overriding sense of community at the national level. American citizenship is meaningful in ways that European citizenship falls short because of the abiding strength of national consciousness (despite the continuing divisiveness of American Civil War memories) as compared with the feeble bonds that bind Europeans together as Europeans. In this sense, despite the success of the EU, there was a greater sense of Europeanness during the Cold War when the Soviet Union was perceived as a common threat, leading to an unprecedented spirit of cooperation creating a community of fate in Europe.

In other words, although some of the political preconditions for European citizenship are present, the most vital are still absent, and the political preconditions for world citizenship are almost totally missing. There are some good reasons to be confused about this latter reality. After all, the United Nations was established to prevent war among nations, and we indulge language games that allow us to talk about “the world community” as if there was one. A closer look at the way the world works makes us realize that the United Nations, despite the rhetorical pretensions of its Charter, is much more an instrument of statecraft than an alternative to it. Indeed, almost all governments continue to be led by political realists who view their role as serving short-term national interests and are privately dismissive of any encroachment on these priorities that derive from notions of “world community,” even if based on international law and morality.

Within this framing of global policy, the UN, international law (even international criminal law), and moralizing rhetoric are all instrumentally and selectively useful in the pursuit of foreign policy goals. The selective application of supposedly global norms makes transparent the state-centric underpinning of world order. For instance, the double standards associated with the implementation of international criminal law suggest that there is accountability for the weak and vulnerable and impunity for the strong, a pattern described as “victors’ justice” after World War II. An International Criminal Court (ICC) has been established, which was a major

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achievement of its advocates, but a success tempered by the realization that the most dangerous political actors forego the option to join. The ICC pursues wrongdoers in Sudan and Libya, while turning a blind eye toward the United States, Russia, China, and the United Kingdom, and their closest allies. The ICC came into being despite the resistance of the largest and most dangerous states in the world. The fact that a tribunal has been established to assess the individual criminal responsibility of political and military leaders of sovereign states is still encouraging as a move toward creating a global rule of law in relation to war/peace and human rights issues even though its performance has so far been uneven and often disappointing.

This clarifies the situation of global citizenship in two key ways. First, there is no global enforcement of global norms relating to fundamental issues of human security, and therefore no bonds of community binding the individual to the world by way of citizenship based on a social contract. Second, major states manipulate the directives of the UN and international law to serve their own national interests, revealing the workings of a *geopolitical regime* of power rather than a *global rule of law regime* that would, above all, treat equals equally. Without a trusted system of laws, no resilient community can be brought into being, and hence no genuine bonds of citizenship can be established.

Such a critique expresses the dilemmas of citizenship in this time of transition. The most fundamental missing element in this premature projection of world citizenship is *time*. It is possible to wish for, and even affirm, human solidarity, and to highlight the commonalities of the human species under conditions of heightened interaction and interdependence. Yet such feelings by themselves are incapable of creating the basis for acting collectively in response to urgent challenges of global scope. Such behavior requires the emergence on grassroots and elite levels of a widespread recognition that the only viable governance process for the planet is one that greatly enhances capabilities to serve human and global interests. This emergence is more likely to occur in an interactive sequence in which transnational grassroots activism precedes governmental shifts in priorities. Bureaucratic entrenchment tends to resist fundamental changes of policy even when initially mandated by the citizenry. Only in the aftermath of a social movement that advances new demands are governing authorities likely to go along. The American civil rights movement is illustrative of these dynamics.

The transition is about moving from the here of egoistic state-centrism to the there of humane geo-centrism, which implies a journey and a struggle against institutionalized social forces that are threatened by or opposed to such a transformation. In this undertaking, the citizen pilgrim combines the identity of a participant in a community and the acknowledgement that the desired community does not presently exist, that its essential nature is to bond with a community that is in the midst of a birth process.<sup>6</sup>

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## Material Conditions of Urgency

Throughout human experience, there has always been a strong case for adopting the identity of “citizen pilgrim,” and many spiritually motivated individuals have done so in their own ways. What is historically unique about the present is that the challenge of transformation is rooted in fundamental material conditions caused by human activities: the outcomes of technological innovations and earlier progress are now threatening apocalyptic blowback. In other words, it has always been true from an ethical perspective that there are better ways for people to live together on the planet, especially under conditions of mutual respect, without collective violence, and in ways that reward achievement while caring for the poor and vulnerable. At times, the failure to adapt to challenges either from natural causes or from conflict has led to the collapse of communities or even entire civilizations, but never before has the species as such been confronted by challenges of global scale.<sup>7</sup> There have always been risks of planetary events, such as collisions with giant meteors, that are beyond human agency, and could at some point doom the species. Today, however, we see the accumulation of dangerous material conditions that have been generated by human agency and could be addressed in a manner that is beneficial for the survival, well-being, and happiness of the species.

The two most dramatic examples of such realities are the dangers of nuclear war and climate change. These two sources of extreme danger both reflect the technological evolution of human society associated with modernity, scientific discovery, and the human search for wealth and dominion, and neither set of risks can be sufficiently reduced without significant progress with respect to the transition from state-centric to geo-centric world order. Addressing these threats requires a “new realism” informing the outlook of those with governing authority. Above all, this new realism involves a readiness to uphold commitments to serve human and global interests as necessary, even if it requires subordinating currently incompatible national and private sector interests.

This “new realism” can only be brought into being by drastic shifts in political consciousness that inform citizenship in such a manner that fosters the well-being of the species and restores collaborative relationship between human activities and the surrounding environment. Such a relationship existed to an impressive degree in many pre-modern societies where there existed a sense of mutual dependence in relations between human activities and natural surroundings, as well, as sensitivity to seven generations past and future, that is absent from the modernist sensibility that only values nature for its resources, as a sink for the free discharge of wastes, or as a retreat from the rigors of “civilization.”<sup>8</sup> With resource scarcities, pollution, ecosystem degradation, and climate change has come the realization that without a comprehensive post-modern equilibrium between human activity and the natural surroundings, the future prospects of the species are rather grim.<sup>9</sup> The fantasies of modernity persist in the form of utopian geo-engineering schemes that represent efforts by the old realism to find technological solutions for the problems generated

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by technology, which is itself raising serious concern and posing severe additional risks of its own.<sup>10</sup>

The imperatives of a transition to a safer, more sustainable world are resisted by the embedded assumptions of the old realism: that military capabilities and war-making are the keys to security, that GDP growth is the indispensable foundation of political stability and economic contentment, that technology and market will find solutions for any challenges that arise before serious threats materialize, and that the correct role of governments of sovereign states is to manage this set of relationships on behalf of national political communities variously situated. Such an orientation is anachronistic and demands fundamental adjustment. Further, the preconditions for such adjustment are much more likely to exist in a non-traumatic situation, that is, before catastrophe becomes a reality rather than a mere possibility.

It would be a serious mistake to underestimate the obstacles that lie ahead and currently seem to lock societies into a civilizational orientation that falls far short of the bio-political potential and survival needs of the human species. At present, governments seem unable to address the practical challenges posed by nuclear weaponry, climate change, poverty, political violence, and human security. Existing governance structures and ideological worldviews dominant among both officials and society seem stuck in past modes of problem-solving and are failing to meet expectations of the citizenry. Such a failure is exhibited by widespread despair, denial, and alienation. Even when signs of active disaffection erupt unexpectedly as happened in the Arab Spring or the Occupy Movement, the embedded structures of governance and their societal allies have displayed an extraordinary capacity to resist such challenges and restore the status quo that was earlier repudiated.

### Recreating Political Community

The calling of the citizen pilgrim is not meant to be a lonely journey toward a better future. It is intended as a call for an engaged citizenry responsive to the need and desire for a reconstituted future as well as a repaired present. Navigating transition will require infusing both political leadership and the electorate with the values and perceptions of the new realism. Transition can be achieved through a shift in governance structures from state-centric world order to a geo-centric world order—for example, by way of UN reform. Alternatively, a geo-centric world order could emerge as the self-conscious result of the establishment of a new framework for cooperative action capable of providing the world with the level of centralized governance that is required, while exhibiting sensitivity to ideas of subsidiarity, decentralization, dispersal of authority, checks and balances, and even philosophical anarchism.<sup>11</sup>

In this respect, the engaged citizen pilgrim is devoted to the here and now of political action (as well as the pursuit of a visionary future), whether by way of exhibiting empathy and solidarity with the sufferings of those most vulnerable or by working

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toward innovative steps serving human and global interests. Such steps should, to the extent possible, reflect the interpretations and understandings of the new realism. Illustrative projects include the establishment of a global peoples parliament with an assigned mission of articulating interests from the perspective of people rather than of governments.<sup>12</sup> Another familiar proposal is a global tax of some kind, levied on currency transactions or international flights or casino and lottery profits, which could loosen the geopolitical and fiscal leash that now limits international institutions in their capacity to serve human and global interests. Along these lines would also be the establishment of an independent emergency force capable of quick reactions to natural disasters and humanitarian catastrophes without being subject to funding by states or the veto power of the permanent members of the UN Security Council. These initiatives are not new, but their active promotion alongside avowals of citizen pilgrimages would manifest modes of participation in political life whose aim was to achieve humane global governance in accordance with the precepts of the new realism.<sup>13</sup>

Because of the still dominant influence of old realism, such innovations are vulnerable to various degrees of what might be called geopolitical cooption. The United Nations itself is undoubtedly the best example of an institutional innovation with a geo-centric mandate that has gone awry almost from its inception, with its deference to both sovereign states and hegemonic actors (via the Security Council veto). The UN has been geopolitically coopted over the period of its existence in such fundamental respects that its defining role has been stabilizing state-centric and hegemonic patterns of world order rather than preventing war and facilitating transition to a geo-centric future. This assessment is most evident in the double standards evident in the pattern of UN responses to emergency situations, for instance, in the diplomacy surrounding the application of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) norm or in relation to the management of nuclear weaponry as between the nuclear weapons states and non-nuclear states.

As mentioned earlier, the potentially valuable contributions of the ICC have so far been marred by the same double standards that infuse the entire edifice of state-centric world order, resulting in a pattern of impunity for the West and accountability for leaders in the South. As such, the ICC is ambivalent in its contributions to peace and justice; still, it may yet become more attuned to human and global interests. It is that attunement that distinguishes the citizen pilgrim from what might be called a “liberal internationalist” who favors stronger global governance capacity, but lives within a bubble of the old realism and its questionable reconciliation of global reform and geopolitics. In this gradualist view of global reform, state-centric logic and national interests are taken for granted as the prism through which foreign policy is shaped. The liberal internationalist favors more international cooperation, including greater funding for international institutions and more responsiveness to humanitarian concerns, but only within the bounds of what is deemed “feasible”

from the perspectives of the leadership of sovereign states and their entourage of governing elites.

## Citizen Pilgrims as Nonviolent Warriors of the Great Transition

Prospects for the future depend on altering the outlook and performance of governments representing states so that they truly align with broad-based citizen, not special, interests. This is particularly true for constitutional democracies with strong private sector interest groups. Authoritarian states, especially with control over the economic infrastructure, do not require the consent of the governed to nearly the same extent, and can act or not more freely for better and worse to take account of rapidly changing perceptions. In constitutional democracies, the relationship of leadership to the citizenry is very direct, though often muted or corrupted by the influence of powerful special interests. Lobbying, extensive secrecy and surveillance, and corporatized media all deflect government from a rational calculation of national interests and tend to obstruct policy deference to long-term human and global interests. The “military-industrial-think tank complex” has over the decades protected the nuclear weapons establishment from disarmament advocacy, and the campaigns of the fossil fuel industry have lent a measure of credibility to climate skepticism despite near unanimity among climate experts.

Government policy will not shift against entrenched interests without a popular mobilization that alters the political climate.

Experience confirms that government policy will not shift against such entrenched interests without a popular mobilization that alters the political climate sufficiently to allow deep change to happen. In the 1980s, this happened in the United States and the United Kingdom in relation to apartheid South Africa. In this case, the ethical repudiation of official racism provided the basis for altering the political climate to such an extent that Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, both conservative leaders who valued strategic and economic cooperation with South Africa, were led to endorse sanctions that contributed significantly to the eventual success of the anti-apartheid campaign.

Nuclear weaponry does pose an ethical challenge, but its main challenge is a prudential one of resting the security of major states and their friends on a conditional commitment to destroy tens of millions of innocent persons in a global setting (what was called Mutually Assured Destruction, or MAD, during the Cold War) where conflict and irrational behavior have been recurrent features. Both ethics and rationality appear to favor phased and verified nuclear disarmament, which was legally stipulated by the nuclear weapons states in the Nonproliferation Treaty of 1968.<sup>14</sup> This prudential case has been reformulated in a post-Cold War setting by research calling attention to the dire consequences for the whole earth due to the prospects of a “nuclear famine” in the event of any intermediate scale use of nuclear weaponry in a limited regional war.<sup>15</sup>

The global challenge of climate change is more complex and, in some ways, exposes more directly the limits of *globally* oriented problem-solving in a state-centric

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framework. Unlike with the case of disarmament, there is strong inter-governmental support for the scientific consensus on the need for mandatory regulations to reduce greenhouse gas (especially carbon) emissions so as to prevent further harmful climate disruption. For the past twenty years, the UN has sponsored conferences that bring together annually most governments in the world to move toward implementing the scientific consensus, and yet little happens. Rationality gives way to special interests, and short-term calculations of advantage are given precedence in the policy arenas of government, producing inevitable and intractable stalemates. The state system seems stuck, and the old realism seems set to shape human destiny in adverse ways for the foreseeable future.

In such settings, the citizen pilgrim offers society a voice of sanity that speaks from the liberated isolation of the wilderness. It envisions a future responsive to the long-term survival of the human species and the goals of maximizing its wellbeing and pursuing global justice. Some citizen pilgrims may be seeking a drastic revision of the worldview of the national leadership cadres of society in the form of the embrace of the new realism of human and global interests, pursued within an enlarged sphere of temporal accountability. Other citizen pilgrims may be thinking of a political community that is planetary in scope that organizes its activities to serve all peoples on the basis of individual and collective human dignity and envisions the replacement of a world of sovereign states with a democratically constituted geocentric framework of governance—norms, institutions, procedures, and actors.

The citizen pilgrim is not primarily motivated by averting danger and mitigating injustice on a global scale, although such concerns occupy the foreground of her political consciousness. The most basic drive is spiritual, to pursue the unattainable, to affirm the perfection of the human experience within the diverse settings present in the world. As Goethe said, “him who strives he we may save.” By striving, the sense of time comes alive in citizenship and political participation, as it must, if the Mount Everest challenges of the Great Transition are to be successfully traversed.

## Endnotes

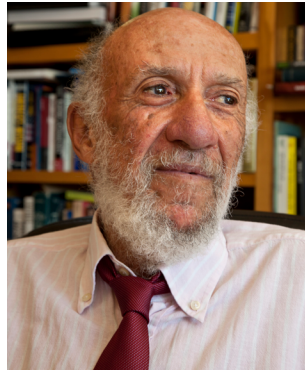
1. I rely upon a distinction between “human” and “global” to underscore the interactive duality of human and earth interests, that is, what is beneficial for the human species and what is beneficial for nature and the environment, and the necessity of achieving their collaboration and reconciliation. Such an ideological posture can be described as eco-humanism. See Robert C. Johansen’s breakthrough contribution seeking to overcome the tension and destructive dualism between the national interest and the human interest: *The National and the Human Interest: An Analysis of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980).
2. For one view of how the state is “disaggregating” in ways that enable it to cope with the challenges of an increasingly interactive world, see Anne-Marie Slaughter, *The New World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). There are also many instances of cooperation among states for the sake of mutual benefit, especially in relation to the management of the global commons.
3. I would include here various anti-democratic forms of imperial and hegemonic governance. See, among others, Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire: The Reality and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002) and especially Michael Mandelbaum’s *Case for Goliath: How America Acts as the World’s Government in the Twenty-first century* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).
4. For a wide-ranging defense of democracy along these lines, see Daniele Archibugi, *Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).
5. Such a struggle has been evident in the United States in the period since the 9/11 attacks. For a critical account of the mismanagement of the balance, see David Cole and Jules Lobel, *Less Secure, Less Free: Why America is Losing the War on Terror* (New York: New Press, 2007).
6. The idea of “citizen pilgrim” is inspired by Saint Paul’s Letter to the Hebrews in which he talks of the pilgrim as



- someone animated by faith in that which is not seen, and does not exist as yet, and yet embarks on a journey dedicated to a better future in which that vision will be realized, not as an earthly city but as a heavenly city.
7. The issue of civilizational collapse, and its avoidance, has been influentially explored in Jared Diamond, *Collapse or How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Viking, 2005). The question of the risks to the species arising from human activities is addressed in Clive Hamilton, *Requiem for a Species: Why We Resist the Truth about Climate Change* (London: Pluto, 2004). See also Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (New York: Henry Holt, 2014).
8. See Richard Falk, *This Endangered Planet: Prospects and Proposals for Human Survival* (New York: Random House, 1972). On the orientation of indigenous peoples, see Maivan Lam, *At the Edge of the State: Indigenous Peoples and Self-Determination* (Ardsley, NY: Transnational, 2000).
9. Sensitive interpretations of the approaching limits of modernity as a legacy of the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution can be found in Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) and Weiming Tu, *The Global Significance of Concrete Humanity* (New Delhi: Munshirivam Manohar Publishers, 2010).
10. Clive Hamilton critically explores this search for a technological escape via geo-engineering from the dilemmas posed by adherence to “the iron law of growth,” population increase, and continuously rising living standards. See *Earthmasters: The Dawn of the Age of Climate Engineering* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).
11. Some suggestions along these lines are contained in Falk, “Anarchism without ‘Anarchism,’” Searching for Progressive Politics in the Early 21st Century,” *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 39, no. 2 (December 2010): 381-398, <http://mil.sagepub.com/content/39/2/381.short>.
12. See Richard Falk and Andrew Strauss, *A Global Parliament: Essays and Articles* (Berlin: Committee for a Democratic UN, 2011).
13. For elaboration, see Falk, *On Humane Global Governance* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1995).
14. See Falk and David Krieger, *The Path to Zero: Dialogues on Nuclear Dangers* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2012). For the contrary view, see Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Nuclear Ethics* (New York: Free Press, 1986).
15. For important research on the devastating effects upon the entire planet of even a limited nuclear war, see the report of research in the “nuclear famine” project of Michael Mills and others, [http://acd.ucar.edu/~mmills/pubs/2014\\_EarthsFuture\\_Mills\\_et\\_al.pdf](http://acd.ucar.edu/~mmills/pubs/2014_EarthsFuture_Mills_et_al.pdf).

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## About the Author



Richard Falk is Albert G. Milbank Professor Emeritus of International Law at Princeton University and Fellow of the Orfalea Center of Global Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He directs the project on Global Climate Change, Human Security, and Democracy at UCSB and formerly served as director the North American group in the World Order Models Project. Between 2008 and 2014, Falk served as UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Occupied Palestine. His most recent book, *(Re)Imagining Humane Global Governance* (2014), proposes a value-oriented assessment of world order and future trends. He is the author or coauthor of many books, including *Religion and Humane Global Governance* (2001), *Explorations at the Edge of Time* (1993), *Revolutionaries and Functionaries* (1988), *The Promise of World Order* (1988), *Indefensible Weapons* (1983), *A Study of Future Worlds* (1975), and *This Endangered Planet* (1973).

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## Roundtable



## Franck Amalaric

With Richard Falk, I believe that the “most daunting challenge of adapting to the realities of the Anthropocene is achieving a soft transition [...] from our state-centric world order to a geo-centric reconfiguring of political community that enables the emergence of effective and humane global governance.” I intuit that what Falk means by global humane governance is a type of governance at the global level that will recognize and ensure respect of the dignity of all women, men, and children, wherever they live on Earth.

The current state-centric world order cannot deal with urgent global issues because national decision-makers today act according to the interests of the part with little regard for the whole. And they do so in line with citizens’ expectations: “Most people do not want or expect the perspective of the whole to be the basis of policy and action by decision-makers that represent the state, but are insistent that those who decide do their best to protect and promote what will most help the part.”

Against this “old realism,” Falk calls for the emergence of a “new realism” that “involves a readiness to uphold commitments to serve human and global interests as necessary, even if it requires subordinating currently incompatible national and private sector interests.” The possibility of a soft transition is thus played out through a struggle between old and new realism, a struggle that unfolds primarily within the political space of nation-states and that aims at gaining people’s support. For only with this support will it be possible to challenge the “institutionalized social forces that are threatened or opposed to such a transformation.”

Spearheading this struggle is the figure of the citizen pilgrim. S/he acts at two levels concomitantly. At the global level, s/he participates in elaborating innovative global institutional arrangements of the geo-centric type and independent from direct state control. At the national level, s/he struggles to change the perspective adopted by national decision-makers—whether for them to adopt the

perspective of the whole or to accept to reduce significantly the powers of the nation-state. In sum, s/he leverages the nascent geo-centric global institutional arrangements to contain the power of nation states.

The important question, it seems to me, is from where the citizen speaks. The end of Falk's essay provides a clear answer: "The citizen pilgrim offers society a voice of sanity that speaks from the liberated isolation of wilderness"; his/her basic drive is "spiritual, [...] to affirm the perfection of the human experience within the diverse settings present in the world."

It is unclear whether Falk describes here a social reality—a description of the people who fight for the transition—or whether he holds that the people who will be the more effective in bringing about the transition are the ones Falk means the latter, for that would then explain his view that the transition requires "a widespread re-orientation of individual identities toward a new model of citizen [...] whose principal affinities are with the species and its natural surroundings rather than to any specific state, ethnicity, nationality, civilization, or religion." So the effective citizen pilgrim would be a person who comes from the wilderness, free from any loyalty but that to the human species.

Let me question this view. If the objective is to create "conditions of mutual respect," there is no need to speak about it from such a standpoint; indeed, doing so can be counterproductive.

For one, achieving mutual respect is complex, and one can only learn what it entails through interactions with others. When acting globally, the citizen pilgrim encounters other persons living in distant lands and in very different conditions (unlike world-traveling businesspersons who do not meet those not like themselves), and explores through this encounter what it would mean to create conditions for mutual respect. It is this particular experience of the global that s/he brings back to the national level; rather than speaking from the isolation of wilderness, s/he speaks from the emerging agora of nascent geo-centric institutional arrangements.

In national political spaces, the citizen pilgrim is effective in her/his struggle to the extent that s/he can connect with fellow-citizens by referring to the shared ideal of creating conditions of mutual respect. Many people who continue to support the "old realism" are convinced that to do so is not incompatible with, and indeed even conducive to, creating such conditions. Sharing the knowledge acquired from encounters with others that this is no longer the case in the Anthropocene, s/he will promote the "new

realism” by referring to values s/he shares with fellow citizens and which provide the bridge between past and future.

Once at a seminar on international solidarity in Finland, a woman explained that she conceived solidarity in concentric circles: solidarity to her family, solidarity to people in her local community, then to her fellow citizens, and to distant others. She felt part of and loyal to all these communities at the same time. And this engenders creative tensions: in order to be loyal to distant others, she felt the need to change Finnish policies that impact them negatively, for instance through complex environmental interdependencies. Her struggle does not make her less Finnish or indeed disloyal towards Finland. In fact, she could even leverage the basic values at the core of the Finnish social contract, such as respect of human rights, to advance it. And it seems to me that this approach—convincing people that to be Finnish implies to care about how Finland behaves towards the rest of the world—is more promising and rich than one which would hold that one should stop being Finnish to become a member of an emerging global community.

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## About the Author



Franck Amalric is on the Executive Board of Utopies, a sustainability consulting firm. Previously, he directed sustainability projects at the Society for International Development and the Centre for Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability. Earlier in his career, he was a research fellow at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Islamabad, Pakistan. He holds a PhD in economics from Harvard University.

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## Joseph Camilleri

For several decades now, we have been experiencing change of epochal proportions. This transition in human affairs, which has yet to run its course, is perhaps the most profound since the appearance of the first agricultural villages more than 10,000 years ago.

Since the two world wars, we have witnessed the unrelenting application of science and technology to industry, commerce, finance, education, and the media. The sheer volume, speed, and intensity of cross border flows of goods and services, capital, technical know-how, arms, pathogens, greenhouse gases, information, images, and people are transforming the way we live and experience the world. What is less clear and deeply troubling is whether the human species can develop in timely fashion the social, cultural, and political arrangements that can ensure the medium to long-term adaptation of the human species. This is precisely the question which Richard Falk's essay addresses.

To the predicament we presently face, Falk suggests two possible and, potentially at least, mutually reinforcing paths to constructive adaptation: a new model of citizenship and new forms of statecraft both oriented to the interests of the species as a whole and its deep and enduring connection with nature. Falk's depiction of these two paths is analytically illuminating and normatively appealing. The case he advances attests to the immense wisdom accrued over a lifetime of intellectual engagement.

There are nevertheless two qualifications which need to be made to the argument as developed in this essay. First, it is not at all clear that the only two relevant entities with which we need concern ourselves are the individual and the state. While each is capable of contributing to more humane and legitimate forms of governance, there are clear limitations to both individual and state agency.

To begin with, the state as presently constituted is but a shadow of what it once was. The structures of the state are in parlous condition not just in failed or collapsing states, but in many of the most advanced industrial states, Europe and the United States included. The legislative, executive, and judicial apparatus of the state is buffeted by market, technological, and societal forces which it scarcely comprehends let alone controls. At the heart of this failure is the decline of political parties, whether of the left or the right—labels which have in any case lost what significance they may once have had. The great invention of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was the modern political party that would serve as the principal agent of political education, popular engagement, and governance within a “national” context. The political party as we have it today has reached its use-by date, and nowhere near enough thought has been given to what might transform it, complement it, or replace it. The emergence of “green” parties has added remarkably little to the sum total of political agency. Until and unless this question is addressed head-on, it is idle to speak of any new form of statecraft.

Similar considerations apply to any new conception of citizenship. There are already millions of people around the world whose sense of identity and intellectual, ethical, and professional commitments are global in scope and orientation. They are as of now exemplars of the “citizen pilgrim.” Their number has not yet reached critical mass, but even if a dramatic numerical increase were to take place over the next ten to twenty years, it is doubtful that such a quantitative shift would produce the desired qualitative change in governance arrangements. What we lack are the appropriate collective movements and organizational forums that can nurture and harness individual human energies and passions and convert them into effective political agency. There is no reason to think that states have the will or capacity to establish, support, or simply act as catalysts for such new forms of mobilization.

To these excruciatingly difficult questions, there can be no simple or single solution. Yet there is one important element that can form part of the solution and which is largely absent in this essay, though not in Falk’s other writings. I am thinking of the ways in which our very diversity—ethnic, religious, cultural, and civilizational—can itself contribute to the formation of a new global ethic and new models of citizenship.

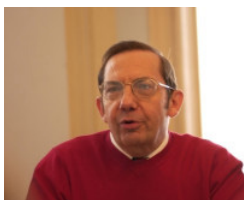
If we consider the world’s major religious and ethical traditions, in particular Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, but also Confucianism, western secular humanism and importantly indigenous cosmologies, we can find a reservoir of accumulated wisdom which views legitimate and humane

governance as resting on the dignity of human life, a commitment to human fulfilment, and a concern for standards of “rightness” in relationships between heaven, earth, and humanity (to use the Confucian formulation). Though the criteria used to measure legitimacy may vary considerably from one tradition to another, there is probably sufficient common ground between these religious and ethical world views to make possible an on-going cross-border conversation about human ethics in general, and political ethics in particular.

Such differences as exist within and between the major civilizational traditions need not be inimical to normative discourse. Indeed, it is arguable that an emerging dialogical ethic in a reconceptualised and re-energised public sphere, in which states play at best a secondary role, but in which appropriately wired educational, cultural, and religious institutions play the more decisive role, can richly contribute to the long and painful journey which awaits both the citizen pilgrim and incipient institutions.

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## About the Author



Joseph Camilleri is Emeritus Professor at La Trobe University, Melbourne, where he held the Chair in International Relations and was founding Director of the Centre for Dialogue. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Social Sciences, chair of the Editorial Committee of the scholarly journal *Global Change, Peace and Security*, and adviser to Ideapod, a new web-based platform aimed at harnessing the power of ideas. His recent publications include *The UN Alliance of Civilizations in Asia-South Pacific: Current Context and Future Pathways* (2014), *Culture, Religion and Conflict in Muslim Southeast Asia* (2013), and *Religion and Ethics in a Globalizing World: Conflict, Dialogue and Transformation* (2011). He has convened several international dialogues and conferences on global governance and conflict resolution.

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## Larry George

Over the past several decades, no one has sustained a more exhaustive and compelling critique of the structural injustice, environmental unsustainability, moral bankruptcy, and political irresponsibility of the current international order than Richard Falk. His comprehensive survey in this essay of the accumulating global crises facing humanity today as a result of the failures of this order, and particularly his indictments of the international legal system and the inability of the major global intergovernmental organizations to rise above narrowly construed state interests and hegemonic power politics, is cogent and incontrovertible. Coming up with novel, effective, and viable new forms of citizenship and political action will be necessary for overcoming the limitations of these existing institutions. As such, I greatly appreciated Falk's thoughtful discussion of how several unexpected recent events and trends suggest at least tentative reasons for optimism, including evolving forms of group political self-identification, the highly publicized transgressions of strong and long-established state security practices and norms by a number of prominent individual citizens, and the emergence of innovative forms of cross-border, non-state political linkages and organization.

Like most readers, I imagine, I found it dishearteningly difficult to find fault with his account of the way that the current geopolitical regime of power disguised as a regime of international law results in a comprehensive absence of effective mechanisms for global enforcement of emerging transnational norms regarding human security needs, thereby compounding the many already formidable impediments to the establishment of a resilient global community. The essay's general recommendations—for a greater insistence on enforceable equity among powerful and weak states and their citizens in matters of international criminal law, nuclear non-proliferation, human rights, and R2P, for example—as well as Falk's specific proposals in favor of UN reform, a global people's parliament, a global tax on transnational economic activity, etc., are all laudable, notwithstanding the many formidable political and material obstacles confronting



their implementation. The essay reaches particularly in the right direction in its insistence that to be successful, transnational grassroots activism will have to precede state action, and in its realistic acknowledgement that any broad movement growing out of such activism will have to be nurtured through a difficult birthing process—a process for which, as Falk acknowledges, humanity may or may not have enough time.

At the heart of Falk's argument is the tension created by the need for new forms of activism and citizenship in a world where existing modes of political agency are both partially empowering and highly constrained. He correctly insists that political identities rooted in and confined to existing state-centric concepts of citizenship are, paradoxically, both indispensable to political action in the present context and, ultimately, hopelessly inadequate (if not counterproductive) in light of the increasingly formidable and multifaceted global challenges facing humanity as a whole. As a simultaneously empowering and self-limiting "juridical and psychological form," nation-state citizenship is Janus-faced. It is, on the one hand, the sole form within which sustained and effective international political action can be undertaken and carried out within the present system of sovereign states. However, on the other hand, it is incapable of transcending the politically debilitating limitations imposed by that very sovereignty, impeding efforts to ascend to the level of global political consciousness and responsibility and to cultivate the kinds of globally oriented political sentiments and imaginaries that will be required to move humanity beyond its current impasse and avoid the treacherous shoals that lie ahead.

Falk's point that "the political preconditions for world citizenship are almost totally missing" is well illustrated in his sobering discussion of the internal contradictions of European political identity, including the unsettling ease with which that identity has proved itself so readily capable of backsliding in the face of recent economic, financial, and security challenges. This observation prompts the vexing ontopolitical question confronting anyone seeking to envision or bring into being a regional, much less global, political community where none exists: if politics is inherently a realm of intergroup struggle and agonistic conflict where important matters are contested and valuable interests are at stake, how can the antagonistic energies generated by political engagement be channeled into a higher commitment to a global human community? How can the provisional political alliances and agonistic confrontations that are inevitable and necessary for cooperative political action in such circumstances be prevented from crystallizing, as they inevitably tend to, into fixed political identities defined in terms of particularistic or parochial interest and shared resentment and animosity directed against specific

designated Others? In the absence of some common, overriding threat to humanity as a whole, is the aspiration for global human solidarity unrealistic, given the fact that all existing forms and structures of ontopolitical identity are the sedimentations of historically constituted responses to past and present common threats—real or imagined, actual or virtual? And does this necessarily mean that political life itself will continue to be inescapably predicated on the presence of some defining, permanent, common adversary or enemy? This fundamental political problematic poses genuinely difficult challenges to any effort to envision a humane and just world order arising from within the prevailing system of culturally pluralistic sovereign states, particularly as the disunities within that system continue to be aggravated by the tumultuous upheavals produced by neoliberal capitalist globalization within an environment of globally declining resources.

Compounding these difficulties, while at the same time suggesting possible sources of animating energy, are the deeply ambiguous cultural legacies of the Axial religions—the great world faiths that have shaped and sustained the major surviving regional civilizational formations of the past three millennia, while displacing or eradicating the vast majority of the world’s earlier non-Axial spiritualities and belief systems. Each of the Axial religious cultures carries powerful spiritual resources and practices with the potential to powerfully inform concrete political action in pursuit of progressive global transformations towards genuinely humane governance. But one need not accept either the premises or conclusions of the late Samuel Huntington’s misconceived “clash of civilizations” thesis to recognize that the contending universalist claims and aspirations of these faith traditions transmit at the same time politically toxic and infectious legacies in the form of dangerously divisive, exclusionary, intolerant, and not infrequently belligerent religio-political identity formations that can be readily exploited by opponents of humane global governance. This is, paradoxically, all the more prevalent as their hold over the spiritual lives of human populations deteriorates, and the divisions between them continue to be exacerbated by the effects of the unfulfilled promises, accumulating negative externalities, and unforeseen or unanticipated malignant social and material consequences of the globalization of Western capitalism and the tele-technocratic rationality associated with it. Whether these faith traditions will turn out to be allies of or obstacles to the eventual achievement of the goals that Falk so eloquently advocates remains among the paramount questions of our age.

A related problematic that Falk’s essay raises is the question of technology itself. Some of Falk’s

comments evince a general skepticism regarding the widespread and growing reliance on technology as a means of overcoming the manifold social and political—as well as moral and spiritual—quandaries characteristic of the twenty-first century world (including many created by or resulting from technology itself). In recent years, I have become, somewhat reluctantly, more and more convinced that many of the solutions to the actual and impending problems created by industrial and post-industrial technology will have to be to a significant extent technological. It should, of course, be clear that a presumptive faith in the capacity of technology alone to overcome these problems is tragically misguided and destined to fail. Having said that, however, it seems to me that—to borrow an old metaphor—the genie is out of the bottle, and humanity has, at best, a generation or two to figure out how to get it back under our control.

Nevertheless, there seem to be some grounds for optimism, at least if tempered by a commitment to radical vigilance and the courage to employ appropriately vigorous means to protect humanity and the planet from the deleterious consequences of overdependence on that very technology. Difficult choices are inevitable. It is hard to envision how even a partial withdrawal from technology could be accomplished without aggravating the already existing problems created by, and compounding the already unsustainable effects of, two centuries of accelerating dependence on industrial technology. Emerging advances in such new areas of scientific research as information digitalization, nanotechnology, materials science, robotics, energy storage and transmission, quantum computing, and even the extremely politically and ecologically risky sciences of molecular biology and pharmaceuticals, hold out genuine promise not only of alleviating much human suffering and defusing many of the current obstacles to human material and spiritual flourishing, but also of empowering and assisting the political struggles of global activists and citizen pilgrims in the transition to a more humane and sustainable mode of global governance. This would particularly be the case if the dominant roles currently played by corporate, military, and domestic police security forces in driving research in all of these areas can be somehow displaced or mitigated (admittedly an enormous challenge). The present generation of scientists and engineers is already much more globally oriented and environmentally enlightened than their predecessors, and they are no less capable of producing politically aware citizen pilgrims than their contemporaries in other fields.

A perhaps deeper challenge, then, is to come up not only with a vision of what humane world governance might look like, but also with an institutional framework or model capable of

institutionalizing and implementing that vision, a set of practices for responding to and taking advantage of fungible technological innovations and advances, and a kind of political activism and citizenship that could mobilize the diverse agonistic energies of those who are unwilling to continue to tolerate ubiquitous injustice. The broad panorama that Falk sketches out in the closing paragraphs of his essay is as compelling a strategic vision for meeting and overcoming these challenges to the collective construction of “a future responsive to the long-term survival of the human species and the goals of maximizing its wellbeing and pursuing global justice” as I have seen. Navigating these perilous waters will not be easy, and success is far from guaranteed. But it never is. If it happens, it will appear first in the form of unlikely breakthroughs, and genuine breakthroughs are always regarded beforehand as unfeasible or impossible. Otherwise, they would not be breakthroughs. The great self-defeating danger is, as Falk points out, not ungrounded speculation, but myopia. Feasibility and possibility are always outside human control in any case, and although the ancient gods have long ago left the building, the human condition continues to be defined by contingency and opportunity, both foreseeable and as yet unimaginable.

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## About the Author



Larry George is Professor of International Politics and former Director of the Program in International Studies at the California State University, Long Beach. His recent writings include “American Insecurities and the Ontopolitics of US Pharmacotic Wars” in *The Geopolitics of American Insecurity: Terror, Power and Foreign Policy* and “Leo Strauss’ Squid Ink” in *The Legacy of Leo Strauss*. His current research explores the historical relations among human sacrifice, war, and sovereignty. He is active in the environmental movement and the hotel workers union movement and writes for Los Angeles Indymedia. He received his BA from the University of California, Irvine, and his PhD from Princeton University.

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## Robert Johansen

In this essay, Richard Falk offers us exactly what we need, yet when we reflect on it, we recognize that it is almost more than we can bear. Before we give up in the face of challenges that carry dire consequences and nearly overwhelm our sense of responsibility, we should recognize that we are in the presence of a prophet with clear vision and accurate warnings. We should take Falk's vision as a touchstone and return to it frequently in our own quest to find and contribute to solutions for the overwhelming problems that now threaten many people, annihilate other species, and destroy life-giving ecosystems.

Falk clearly explains the need for major change in value realization, identities, attitudes, and political and economic systems or structures. Political institutions must be less state-centric, more representative, more sensitive to long-term human and global needs, and more focused on human and planetary security.

Seeing the speed with which threats are multiplying and the relentless resistance to change among those who have the power to change, we may feel eager to declare ourselves global citizens as an antidote to the poisonous aspects of our political culture and to join a movement that assumes the harmony of all will one day win out. Yet even this is not enough to meet Falk's prophetic understanding.

Indeed, he cautions against such initiatives because they could inadvertently perpetuate more of the same. They do not count the cost of truly redemptive behavior, they downplay the need for political struggle to achieve necessary change, and they may be insufficiently courageous in speaking clearly about the extent of change needed.

Enter the citizen pilgrim. Falk assures us that this is not to be an isolated pilgrimage, yet he believes that we cannot now be a citizen of an international community because the community

does not exist. We cannot vote for it, pay taxes to it, or rely on its rule of law. What can we do?

As citizen pilgrims, if I understand correctly, we can give our loyalty to a polity that does not yet exist in reality but does exist in our minds. It is not hard to imagine that polity because it includes everyone and implements the basic values of human dignity, as well as respects nature. We can see pieces of it everywhere, sometimes inspiring action. Other times, the forces against it shatter our hopes.

Yet Falk does not suggest that we simply dwell on or proclaim our vision. He calls us to new realism, which guides each citizen's pilgrimage into the wilderness of today's political and economic struggles, deliberating elevating the good of all above the good of parts.

A citizen pilgrim faces constant tension between the vision of a preferred future and the call to be realistic about how to live this day. Can we be honest about the content and the extent of what is required, while still supporting incremental change that may succeed because it does not harm anyone's security in the short run, yet opens the door to fundamental structural change in the long run? I think Falk believes that we can do this as long as we simultaneously grapple honestly with keeping the long-term vision in the immediate political struggle.

Moreover, if one of the two must be compromised, try hard to keep the vision clear. We must be clear about the values we seek even while we remain experimental about the means we use, although the (nonviolent) means themselves must be consistent with the end values. In a world where we cannot influence much of what even our own government does, integrity requires us to be absolutely clear about where we stand on value implementation which must occur if the human species is to survive with dignity.

Falk acknowledges the difficulties in the tensions and explains that, in the end, the motivation for the citizen pilgrim is spiritual. Indeed, this is what inspires the efforts to reduce human suffering. Great leaders throughout history have recognized this and sought to live lives of exemplary ethical integrity as citizen pilgrims.

In future thinking by Falk and others, readers look forward to more detail about the kinds of political struggles, social movements, and self-chosen citizen's labels that we are likely to find most

promising. Also, if the necessary scale and nature of changes require spiritual motivation, how do we ignite that spark in ourselves and nurture it in others?

How is spiritual motivation manifested in social movements? Falk criticizes some and endorses others. Can a central focus on core human rights and commensurate human duties, while eliciting sensitivity to diverse cultural applications, provide a unifying foundation for political programs for which to mobilize powerful transnational leverage, analogous to what occurred in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa and the civil rights movement in the US? Can we together work for better understanding of how our identities may become all-inclusive in deed, rather than merely in rhetoric, as we amplify the voices of the unheard and the oppressed? Could a transnational movement aimed at abolishing the “global apartheid” imposed by the existing international economic and political system build transnational strength? Could efforts to overcome gender oppression be a central catalyst? How can environmental protection inspire sufficient support to force change? Of course, all the preceding can be included under the rubric of human security and ecological sustainability.

How moderate or radical does the “new realism” suggest citizen pilgrims should be in setting specific goals to mobilize political action? How broad a united front should one seek at this time in history? What compromises can one accept?

Can religious organizations become more helpful, recognizing that at their best they advocate treating others as one wants to be treated by them? Can they cultivate awareness that in practice they have been heavily nationalized and even further fragmented by intra-religious factionalism that itself can become violent, as now rages in Syria and Iraq while being exploited and manipulated by others?

How can a first-order priority to abolish poverty worldwide also move toward slow-growth or no-growth economies? How can deeper sensitivity to human rights ensure simply that everyone on earth has a job? Can our support for the International Criminal Court make clear that the rule of law prohibiting war crimes and crimes against humanity must apply to all the permanent members of the UN Security Council, not just to France and the United Kingdom or, in actual practice, to officials from weaker governments? We need a deeper understanding of when and how it is better to enforce the law on some, even if it is not yet enforced equally on all, rather than not to have any enforcement at all. Can we engage people from all cultural regions of the world in envisaging how to move to more inclusive, layered identities, and from a territorially delimited state system to more equitable forms

of governance, ranging from local to regional to global, that can provide human security for all and protect global ecosystems?

How can we communicate more directly and boldly that we insist on structural change? Voting for president and members of Congress once every few years is clearly insufficient, especially when elected officials usually do not even consider major change. We do need a global movement or network of movements in which we can participate and to which we can contribute.

Does our ability to communicate instantly to millions around the planet carry unrealized potential? Can social media enable more influential pressure from “below,” or more effective coalition-building by existing members of parliaments around the world to speak for the people of the world?

Falk’s analysis sobers us deeply, yet inspires us because we recognize the uncommon gravity and honesty of his words. This message rings true. May additional citizen pilgrims hear the ringing. Although the political success of the pilgrimage that Falk describes is never assured, nothing less is worthy of mature human beings in this age.

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## About the Author



Robert Johansen is Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame and Senior Fellow at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. He is author of *The National Interest and the Human Interest: An Analysis of U.S. Foreign Policy*, a co-contributor to *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World*, and author of articles on global governance, including publications in the *Journal of Peace Research*, *World Politics*, *Global Governance*, *Third World Quarterly*, and *Human Rights Quarterly*. He is a co-founder of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies and served for two decades as its Director of Graduate Studies. His research focuses on how to increase compliance with prohibitions of war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity, and crimes against the peace.

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## Robert Paehlke

It is a challenge to respond to Richard Falk's piece with more than agreement. I especially appreciated Falk's phrasing regarding matters with which I have recently wrestled in my own writing. They include 1) achieving "soft transitions" within "a geo-centric reconfiguring of political community," 2) going from "egoistic state-centrism" to "humane geo-centrism," and 3) a new realism focused on "ecological challenges and the rejection of old realism's notion of security through military capabilities and war-making." That language captures things precisely and clearly.

Given the multi-dimension urgency humanity now faces, those soft transitions will not come easily. They may be especially challenging in North America given recent US Supreme Court decisions on election financing, America's constitutionally reinforced political paralysis, and the entrenched political power of resource industries in Canada. Indeed, political and policy paths sometimes seem to have been all but foreclosed almost everywhere.

Power and wealth dominate the institutions of the political sphere. A transition, especially when it must be a rapid one, demands a citizens movement operating in the political and cultural realm. I think that that movement should also push global concerns, including climate change and rising inequality, within the economic realm through consumer and workplace action, and even through entrepreneurship that is mindful of concerns beyond the balance sheet. In effect, this would push global political concerns directly into the market realm.

Global citizens could use (even, if you will, occupy) the market in ways that run counter to the preferences of concentrated wealth. Falk does not exclude such possibilities though he does note (and I concur in broad terms) that the belief that technology and markets will always find timely solutions is largely mythological. Yet, I think there is some hope that it is not entirely mythological. Clearly, there are obstacles and limits to citizen action within markets, but given the urgency we face, we need to utilize even limited opportunities, if only to broaden our appeal and to buy

the time needed to build our political strength. I am thinking here especially of market initiatives in renewable energy and local and organic foods.

Citizen action through markets might also include, of course, the development of citizen- and civil society-based media and media inputs. The discussion in which we are engaged here is in effect part of a media building effort. I was also recently impressed, to identify one other example, by the World Meteorological Organization's creation of hypothetical, but realistic 2050 weather forecasts based in the IPCC climate models. This effort, to be broadcast by commercial outlets including the Weather Channel will help to contextualize climate change in relation to everyday experience.

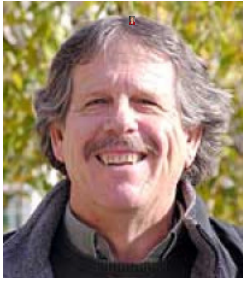
Finally, let me offer an additional item for Falk's list of challenges that governments "stuck in past modes of problem-solving" seem unable to address: the rising and increasingly excessive cost of hegemonic power. I believe the global system is not far from a critical moment on this matter. Since the start of the 2003 Iraq War, more Americans have come to understand these limits. Holding hegemonic power in today's world all but assures greater domestic inequality, declining infrastructure, and, ultimately, economic decline.

Finding a way out of our global system of hegemonic dominance (or any system of great power rivalry as an alternative) requires a global solution. Are there not alternatives other than a new hegemon or yet another arms race? Might this be a moment when more would be open to global alternatives to distorted national priorities associated with excessive military spending? As Falk makes clear, the way out is a citizen-led shift from old realism to new realism.

Pursuing the new realism is a long quest that needs to be accomplished quickly. We pilgrims need whatever help we can get wherever we can find it. Grasping tenuous moments and limited routes may be the best opportunities available for now. We can, however, hope that small seeds will grow quickly.

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## About the Author



Robert Paehlke, a political scientist, is Professor Emeritus of Environmental and Resource Studies at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada. He was editor of the environmental journal/magazine *Alternatives* from its founding in 1971 until 1982 and continues to serve on its editorial board and blogs on the politics of the environment. He is author or editor of seven books, including *Hegemony and Global Citizenship: Transitional Governance for the 21st Century* (2014); *Some Like It Cold: the Politics of Climate Change in Canada* (2008); *Democracy's Dilemma: Environment, Social Equity and the Global Economy* (MIT Press, 2004) and *Environmentalism and the Future Of Progressive Politics* (Yale UP, 1991). In 1995 he edited *Conservation and Environmentalism: An Encyclopedia*.

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## Author's Response



## Response to Comments

I am most grateful to these five influential scholars in international affairs for their responses to my sketch of a possible role for citizens in shaping a livable and sustainable future in light of the survival challenges currently shadowing the human species. I am further grateful for the generosity of spirit that pervades their comments, suggesting the presence of strong ethical affinities and a process of inquiry that is collaborative, rather than competitive, in its underlying spirit. This itself is encouraging, given the immensity and urgency of the challenges confronting our species at the onset of the Anthropocene Age. These challenges appear to be overwhelming existing problem-solving mechanisms that are either state-centric or geopolitically hegemonic, not oriented toward producing solutions based on serving human well-being and global interests.

I think there is agreement among us that the way forward is obscure, and that it is an unknown terrain containing many paths worth exploring and others best to be avoided. I focused on the reorientation of citizenship through the visionary image of “the citizen pilgrim” not as the only way to respond to survival prayers, but rather as a relevant revisioning of identity that self-consciously rejected the established world order, rooted in the war system and claims to hegemonic power. What I and others are advocating in its place is geopolitical nonviolence, principled resistance, and detachment from existing political ideologies. This entails a shift away from the still prevailing claims of “political realists,” who continue to believe that the course of history is essentially shaped by the outcomes of war, to a “new realism,” a view from the “wilderness,” as I described it.

Franck Amalric and Robert Paehlke believe it is possible and necessary to pursue these shared goals without withdrawing, but rather through engaging in an innovative manner that drastically reformulates what it means “to see like a state” in the early part of the twenty-first century. In different, yet connected ways, Amalric and Paehlke also question the national disaffiliation that I appear to be recommending as a cleansing tonic. I don’t disagree with such efforts to promote

change and adaptation from within, provided they are accompanied by an existential and integral awareness of the degree to which the construction of a political community of the whole is essential for the survival of the human species and is unlikely to emerge from incremental reform, however innovative.

Generalizing from an instructive anecdote about reshaping the Finnish national interest so that it becomes almost indistinguishable from the global interest, Amalric argues for the indispensability of such an attitudinal shift. If I understand correctly, this kind of engagement resembles what Buddhists convey by their emphasis on “right mindedness.” There is much merit in such political pedagogy, which purports to globalize our concept of national interests rather than to abandon the national optic of political self-understanding.

Yet I think we who live in the US cannot easily, or perhaps ever, think like Finns, and should probably not even attempt to do so. The US has grown accustomed to “governing” the world for a century or more, and even if we consider ourselves critics of such a hierarchical status, our consciousness is shaped by the experience associated with this global role. America was given the opportunity to act as “the conscience of the world,” and in some respects did so after both world wars of the last century. However, it was never willing to forego the special material, psychological, and political gains associated with this role, and it was arrogantly unwilling to accept the rule of law and authority of the UN that it self-righteously proclaimed as obligatory for its adversaries.

Beyond this, the private sector agendas of corporations and banks (mis)shaped global policy such that what was treated by national political leaders as good for the US turned out to be often bad for the peoples of the world and, in some cases, bad for American citizens, especially workers. I believe it is only the rare American who can adopt the consciousness required for the pursuit of the human/global interest. It is possible to become alienated from the American global role in the manner of the hard left or principled expatriates, but such positions tend to become inverted negations of nationalist consciousness, and are infrequently animated by the idea of safeguarding the human species and the natural surrounding within which it is embedded.

Joseph Camilleri, himself long a distinguished student of these issues, considers that the focus on individuals (via citizenship) and states (as the institutional political actor) does not have the mobilizing

potential needed to achieve the kind of global transformations that seems required. He favors placing emphasis and hopes on civilizational and religious orientations that draw on the accumulated wisdom and experience of the most enduring ethical traditions and on wider identity networks than generated by sovereign states. Camilleri has confidence that the right combination of diversity and commonality can enable creative syntheses of the sort that could generate a new globally centered political and moral consciousness. This represents one promising way to express the preconditions for organizing life on the planet in order to increase the prospects of species survival and well-being.

While recognizing the fundamentalist and regressive features of these broad traditions in a manner similar to Larry George, Camilleri makes a good case for the claim that only such a reorientation of outlook has any prospect of meeting the policy challenges that are increasingly the horizon. In this respect, Camilleri can be read as a humanistic and pluralistic complement to Samuel Huntington's geopolitical provincialism, both sharing a shift of focus from state-centrism to religious/civilizational wholes. Camilleri thinks along synergistic lines as opposed to the conflictual assumptions that underlie Huntington's worldview.

Robert Johansen, whose work I have long appreciated, shares the underlying assessments that I put forward, but is dedicated, as his lifelong efforts manifest, to situating visionaries and incrementalists in the same big tent. He believes we need both kinds of engagement simultaneously as interconnected undertakings. Underneath this assertion is an abiding conviction, which has guided his own influential scholarship on behalf of a better human future, that it is necessary to work for a better world now because the challenges we face have an urgency that cannot be postponed. If I read him correctly, he aligns his engagement with those who insist that the longest journey starts with the first step, and that such steps should be taken for as long as possible, with leaps of faith in more radical direction only when and if it becomes absolutely necessary. Johansen associates my discourse with a prophetic voice and, like Paehlke and Amalric, does not believe that a retreat to the wilderness is called for. Nor do I most of the time, except as a matter of purifying my mentality in order to shake free of the tyranny of past and present.

My own efforts have oscillated between deep involvement in the concrete "now" of perceived catastrophic wrongs (as in Gaza or, earlier, Vietnam) and the visionary "then" of humane governance and a spiritualized sense of solidarity not only within the bounds of humanity, but extended to

nature, and indeed to the cosmos. It is these extensions that reject the newly fashionable ethos of anthropocentrism, which I find to be a form of ecological infantilism that afflicts the species and threatens its future. Transcending anthropocentrism depends on a nurturing of the spiritual dimensions of our apprehensions of the “new realism,” which among other ambitions, seeks the re-enchantment of nature.

What I do believe, which may set me apart somewhat, is the belief that the desired future cannot be attained incrementally, but will involve sharp ruptures with the present that cannot be predicted on the basis of present trends. It is for this reason that I have dedicated myself to two vectors of thought/feeling/action: the commandments of values and the politics of impossibility, that is, trying to do what is right without succumbing to a political calculus of probabilities and interpreting historical change, not from the perspective of “power” but rather from that of “values.” Rather than an endorsement of ideas of moral evolution, this puts forth a manifesto of political struggle dedicated to an affirmed future without being inhibited by perceptions of improbability.

Johansen raises many questions about the implications of my more general prescriptions. Interestingly, he is varying the adage about “the devil lives in the details” by implying that the devil haunts those domains that are generalized without bothering to specify details. In other words, “the devil lives most happily if not irritated by details.”

Finally, I want to touch upon Larry George’s sensitive reassessment of the relevance of technology to a sustainable future. While agreeing that it is technology that got us into this extraordinary mess, he has become convinced that without technological ingenuity, our prospects of meeting the challenges of the day are almost nil. In effect, we do not have the luxury of time to wait for some form of postmodern re-enchantment of nature. We can surely invite the gods to return, as several of us wish, but to wait for their arrival seems at this point a path to species suicide, or more pointedly, a waiting for Godot. George recognizes fully that redirecting technology toward planetary justice and species survival cannot be assumed just because it seems rational to do so. It poses a formidable political challenge of its own that involves overcoming entrenched interests and ingrained wrong mindfulness with respect to security and well-being. In effect, if I comprehend George’s meaning, it requires wrenching technology from the clutches of capitalist greed.



I have benefitted greatly from this interaction with the authors of these comments and believe that such dialogic exercises are themselves part of the process of generating from thin air new configurations of political community, which if sustained and replicated in many venues, could move us closer to a future we need, wish for, and sometimes dream about.